

105.11 54 Finger

It was true, he admitted, that he had been angry at Mrs. McKee in June, 1925, because on the night of June 4 he had looked through a window of the telephone building and saw her talking with a man in her bedroom. But he declared that he had never used abusive language to her over the phone, as one witness had testified.

Mrs. Minar Peterson testified that she overheard a telephone conversation on September 22, in which Mrs. McKee had told some man that he might call on her at the office that night. No time was set. Robert Corbett said he had passed the telephone building shortly before midnight last night and saw some one in the office, but couldn't say whether it was a man or a woman. Martha Cominsky, sister of the defendant, corroborated his testimony that he came home by 10 o'clock on the night in question, saying she could fix the time from hearing two Northwestern trains which pass her home between 9 and 10.

Acquittal of Cominsky on a charge which might have carried him to the gallows is viewed by attorneys who have watched the course of the trial as a decisive victory in the fight which Albert Wehde has been making for three years to prove that finger-print system of identification is not infallible.

Wehde was sent to Leavenworth prison in 1921 to serve three years, on a charge of having attempted to transport arms to East Indian revolutionists -- before the United States entered the world war. After nine months President Harding pardoned him. While in prison Wehde saw an Oklahoma police officer tamper with finger-print evidence in a case with \$35,000 reward attached. This led Wehde to experiment, and after many failures he succeeded in evolving a method whereby he can forge finger-impressions perfectly.

Wehde and John Nicholas Beffel are co-authors of a book entitled "Finger-Prints Can Be Forged", in which the details of the Wehde process are given, as a specific warning to society against possible falsified evidence in criminal trials. In that book it is disclosed that William M. Evans, prosecution expert in the Cominsky case, was present at a demonstration by Wehde of the latter's forgery process, following which Al Dunlap, president of the Illinois-State Association for Identification, wrote Wehde refusing to let him illustrate that process at the association's convention.

The Wehde-Beffel book is published by the Tremontia Publishing Company of Chicago.

In contradistinction to the 10 alleged points of similarity cited by the expert Evans in the murder-imprint and that of Cominsky, the Wehde-Beffel book points out that one of the Bertillons in France once found more than 30 identical markings on imprints by twin brothers.

Juries in New Orleans, Jersey City, N.J. and in Orange County, N.Y., also have refused to convict defendants on finger-print evidence.
